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ABSTRACT

This paper, the fourth in a series, looks at the critical role that teachers play in the success or failure of educational change. The most powerful impact on learning occurs when teachers change their practices and beliefs. The paper describes the experiences of two K-6 Pacific schools--Waialae (Honolulu) and Blanche Pope (Oahu) with systemic curriculum reform through school-community shared decision making. It also describes the Pacific Educator in Residence (PEIR) internship, which is designed to strengthen educator-leadership, and the importance of professional interaction among teachers. Before teachers adopt the latest innovation, they should consider whether the program addresses an important need, shows evidence of success, and works toward improvement of the school's professional culture. Other factors for success include: (1) administrative endorsement and available resources; (2) teacher interest; (3) collaborative work cultures; (5) involvement of teacher unions and professional associations; and (6) individual teachers' acceptance of responsibility. (Contains 18 references.) (LMI)

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# Synthesis of the Research on Educational Change
# Part 4: The Teacher's Role

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by Rita Hocog Inos and Mary Anne Quigley

## Teachers: Where Are They on the Journey of Change and Where Do They Go from Here?

Educational change depends on what teachers think and do. Early studies of the change process focused primarily on the process of educational change within whole schools and organizations implementing significant innovations. This paper, the fourth in a series, looks at the critical role that teachers play in the success or failure of educational change. The most powerful impact on the transformation of student learning occurs when teachers change their practices and beliefs. Because change is inevitable, Pacific educators must become leaders in the change process if they wish to have a positive impact on their schools and classrooms and, ultimately, on students' performance. Teachers can achieve this position of leadership through reading, observing and participating, and becoming familiar with all aspects of the change process.

Change is essential to improving the quality of learning opportunities for students. Educators have learned that change requires both systemic and individual efforts. Successful change efforts provide lasting results through institutionalization and renewal. These changes occur only when educators, individually and together, seek opportunities to reflect, learn, share the vision, and act in concert to implement lasting dynamic changes. Pacific educators need to examine where they are on the journey to change and gain insight and understanding on why some educators are not far along the path of change and why some have not even packed their bags.

Institutionalization occurs when changes become part of people's everyday behavior and beliefs. Most educators have experienced school improvement attempts that were abandoned soon after implementation. Research by Horsley, Terry, Hergert, and Loucks-Horsley (1991) reflects the common experience of innovative, necessary change begun enthusiastically and forsaken before reaching institutionalization. Fortunately, these aborted attempts have not discouraged educators from looking for new and better ways to improve the learning experience, and help teachers and students grow. Of major concern is whether good changes have been "lost" through failure to carry them past implementation to institutionalization. Of equal concern is the question: Who is to blame? Unfortunately, failure to bring innovation to institutionalization is frequently charged to the resistance of teachers. Michael Fullan quotes an anonymous statement that reflects a widely accepted view, "If a new program works, teachers get little of the credit; if it fails, they get most of the blame..." Clark and Astuto (1994) surmise that the education reform movement has produced disappointing results and that policymakers blame these results on the reluctance or incompetence of practitioners.

## Appreciating the Teacher's Dilemma

Fullan has established that for stability and change, the mental health and attitudes of teachers are crucial to success. Educational change depends on what teachers think and do. Teaching conditions for the majority of educators have deteriorated steadily over the past 20 years. The breakdown of the family and the subsequent increased complexity of societal problems are reflected in the emergence of serious challenges for schools. Teacher stress and alienation are at an all time high. Cocoran, Walker and White (1988) reported that teachers felt an increasing loss of control over what they taught, less

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influence over school policy decisions, few chances to work collaboratively, and a steady drift of authority from the schools. Routine, overload, too broad a range of educational goals and expectations, the devaluation of teachers by the community and the public, coupled with the ambivalence of youth toward the value of education, present intolerable conditions for sustained educational development and satisfying work experiences.

Teachers have seen reforms come and go. Weiss (1993) quotes one teacher with a typical attitude: "A lot of the good things, so-called good things, have turned out to be unsuccessful. And it's made a lot of people very cynical and indifferent about where it's going." (1993, p. 77) Weiss has produced evidence that teachers can gain satisfaction by having a say in decision making. When teachers have a say, they feel better respected and more professional. However, participant satisfaction is gained at a high price. Teachers who take an active part in change work long hours, give up opportunities to spend more time with their students, or teacher's preparation. They assume responsibilities that once were the realm of administrators. To make matters worse, Weiss found that in most of the schools studied, teachers who want a voice are being overridden. They are given a limited role in decision making. The extent of their authority is ambiguous and it can be withdrawn. Teachers realize that their preferences can be overridden if they conflict with those of the principal or district administrators; therefore, teachers often shape what they propose to fit "acceptable" criteria.

## How Much Does Change Cost Teachers?

In the institutionalization and renewal phase of this synthesis (Part 3), it was established that staff development should be led by teachers, for teachers, on their own campuses. When the teachers devise the content and theme of these sessions, communication, assistance and empowerment occur. Fullan (1993) further states that one of the most serious mistakes over the past 30 years has been the naive assumption that involving "some" teachers in curriculum development or in program development would facilitate implementation, because it would increase acceptance by "other" teachers. However, there was a failure to distinguish between the "change" (something new happening) and the "change process" (complex and sustained interaction between policy and action that leads to institutionalization and renewal.) For most teachers, change by fellow teachers was just as much externally experienced as if it had come from the university or government. Odden & Wohlstetter (1995) found that many schools struggling with shared decision making tend to concentrate power in a school council consisting of a few committed teachers. Because of the high demand on their time, the committed few often felt exhausted and burned out. Other teachers experienced isolation in the absence of meetings that would have allowed them to work with other interested parties on specific projects.

Change is a personal experience. Each teacher affected by change must have the opportunity to work through this experience in ways in which rewards will at least match costs. Because officials advocating and developing changes get more reward than costs, and teachers who implement changes experience more costs than rewards, this explains why, although everyone wants change, conditions remain the same.

A high price is paid by some teachers who try to move ahead and work towards change when their colleagues are not ready and hold back. Innovative teachers often encounter jealousy and animosity for their efforts and become discouraged in their attempts to make things better. When, however, all teachers within a system work together to improve student learning and are supported by the administration and the community, the outcomes are positive and far reaching.

Honolulu's Waialae School (K-6) is a Pacific island example of the kind of lasting systemic change that can occur when all teachers are involved in curriculum, instruction and assessment decisions. Through School Community Base Management (SCBM) conferences, Waialae teachers, administrators, parents and community leaders working in partnership, evaluated their progress and created a new vision for the school, that of equipping children to become creative problem solvers, self-confident risk takers, well-rounded, capable of multiple dimensions, and socially responsible to others and to the world. After the creation of the school-community vision, Waialae teachers developed assessment tasks for each element of the vision. In so doing, teachers made some startling discoveries concerning the relationship between learning and assessment. Several questions emerged from this process of discovery:

- Was each student being offered long, varied, demanding rewarding enough skill building and knowledge to accomplish each performance?
- What do we owe students before they can be held accountable to set standards?
- Can we report results without taking into account their opportunities to learn?

Teachers studied and learned together to answer these questions. Sessions covered topics such as how to plan thematic units that are rich in thinking and problem solving and that require students to reason, infer, critique

and analyze. Other topics included how to engage students in developing their own set of references, constructing and understanding about the qualities of good work, and what is the best manner and form students can use to reflect upon their work.

Waialae educators feel a deep obligation to respect and foster public trust. Teachers are devising a multidimensional student-assessment system that will enable the school to provide the public with data on how well students are learning. Waialae School is also a model for professional development that is built on the essentiality of all participants learning together, with time specifically set aside to talk, experiment, reflect, and assess.

Blanche Pope School (a K-6 school in the Windward section of the island of Oahu) is another exemplary model of the exciting results of innovative curricular reform that can occur when the entire community is involved. The entire school community voted to restructure their outlook toward education and student performance. Rather than lowering expectations for students in at-risk situations, the SCBM's aim is to enhance academic growth through challenging and stimulating activities usually reserved for gifted and talented students.

Cadres at Pope School are using the Inquiry Process to accelerate student learning and create powerful and long-lasting improvement. The Inquiry Process takes a problem-solving approach to scrutinize the school's challenge areas. Hypotheses are formed to guide the investigation of each challenge area by a cadre. This process allows the school to objectively analyze and understand its problems and to create insightful solutions.

Through this process, change can occur in different ways, at different levels, in many different time frames and at the comfort level of many different individuals. Although Pope School is still at the beginning stages of systemic change, the community is already inspired because it sees all parties working together to create the best school for all the children in the community. Meanwhile, a high standard of school/community collaboration and cooperation is being set for the benefit of the children.

These two Pacific schools, Waialae and Blanche Pope, are blazing trails to full collaboration and participation in curricular reform and lasting systemic change. They have demonstrated the powerful effect of school/community involvement and consensus. When everyone participates in improving the opportunities for learning, the students can only succeed.

## How Do Teachers Assess Change?

Innovations and reforms can improve or worsen existing conditions. Most teachers respond to a "practicality" ethic. Doyle and Ponder (1978) discuss three aspects of this "practicality" ethic: congruence, instrumentality and cost. These are defined as follows:

- "Congruence" refers to the teacher's best estimate of how students will react to the change, and how well the innovation will fit the teacher's situation.
- "Instrumentality" concerns the "hows" of implementation; philosophy, theory, or general principles are unacceptable because they lack procedural referents. Teachers must have some understanding of the operational meaning of the change before they can make a judgment.
- "Cost" can be defined as the teacher's investment-to-return ratio of experiences. Personal cost in time, energy, and feelings of inadequacy seem to have constituted the major costs of changes in education over the past 30 years. Fullan observes that, from the perspective of individual teachers, the balance between incentives and disincentives helps explain the outcome of change efforts. House (1974) summarizes how teachers view most innovations when he states: "Personal costs are high and benefits are unpredictable."

The meaning of change for teachers can be understood most directly by examining the following criteria teachers use in assessing any given change. These criteria pertain to the balance of rewards and costs and explain why teachers choose to support any particular change:

1. Does the change address a need? Will the students learn? Will they be interested and motivated? Will the change produce the claimed results?
2. How clear is the change in terms of what the teacher will have to do? Are there procedural referents?
3. How will the change affect the teacher in terms of time, energy, new skills, sense of excitement, competence and interference with existing priorities?
4. How rewarding will the experience be in terms of interaction with peers and others?

Weiss (1993) collected data that indicate most schools with shared decision making (including schools in widely touted reform districts), are not places where teachers focus decision making on teaching and learning. Weiss found that "empowered" teachers tend to slow the pace of change. Teachers want to rethink and shape changes to fit the needs of students and teachers. Unfortunately, some of the slowdown seems to evolve from tiredness and overwork and a reluctance to take on any additional responsi-

bilities unless they are pushed to do so. In addition, even potentially good changes do not fare well because teachers face too many changes at any given time.

## Understanding the Teachers' World is the Key

Fullan attributes the failure of the promotion of change to several reasons. The strategies promoters other than teachers commonly use do not work because those strategies are derived from a "world" that is different from the teachers' world. Innovations are rationalized from a perspective outside the classroom. Sometimes, innovations cannot be translated into practice with available resources. Innovations may advocate good ideas and resources, but assume unrealistic conditions. Innovations may produce no clear evidence that they would benefit a particular teacher's students. Some innovations do not clearly specify procedural content; others fail to acknowledge personal costs, the meaning of change to teachers, and conditions and time required to develop the new practices. Fullan points out that the reasons why teachers reject certain innovations are every bit as rational as reasons why advocates promote them. The message to everyone outside the role of teachers is, "Understand the subjective world—the phenomenology—of the role incumbents play as a necessary precondition for engaging in any change effort with them." (1993, p. 131)

If each specific change can be tailored to meet individual school/community needs, then that change becomes meaningful and can take hold. In order for change to be adopted and to become enduring, it must be adapted to each particular and unique school climate and culture, and to meet the needs of those participating in that process.

PREL's Pacific Educator in Residence (PEIR) internship is a successful program that was devised to incorporate the unique subjective world of educators into applied research and hands-on learning. The PEIR Program is designed to strengthen school leadership development in the Pacific region. As part of this program, qualified educators from the region are invited to join the Laboratory to expand and improve their leadership skills. PREL and PEIR participants negotiate a professional development plan, including the completion and delivery of a home-based project, which is based on the unique circumstance of each individual PEIR and designed to meet the specific needs of their school or district, including the completion and delivery of a home-based project. The knowledge each PEIR brings to the design of these projects is based on the experience or PEIRs in the home setting, ensuring that the project fits into the world it is intended to help.

In conjunction with the project development, PEIRs study to become knowledgeable in all aspects of the change process and how to support teachers as they endeavor to improve student learning. Following implementation of home-based projects in the Pacific entities, PREL assists former PEIRs to further refine and improve their products to meet emerging needs, and to ensure that the teachers involved are receiving all the necessary backup they require to implement change.

The powerful impetus participants bring to the change process in their school system is based on the integration of the research projects with the subjective world of teachers. Former PEIRs are able to adapt and assimilate the latest innovations into the realities of their unique communities, and to successfully tailor changes to fit the specific needs of their school, the teachers, students, and parents alike.

## What Makes Change Work?

Change processes that foster sustained professional development over a teacher's career and lead to student benefits and improved outcomes may be one of the most effective sources of revitalization and satisfaction open to teachers. If teaching is unsatisfying and unexciting, students will find learning unsatisfying and boring. Increasing the teachers' and schools' capacity for managing change and bringing about continuous improvement is imperative because of the need to guide Pacific children into productive, satisfying and successful participation in the global community.

Researchers have identified teacher isolation and its opposite, collegiality, as the best starting point for understanding what works for teachers. Relationships with other teachers are critical variables. Change involves learning to do something new, and interaction is the basis for social learning. New meanings, new behaviors, new skills, and new beliefs depend significantly on whether teachers are working in isolation (Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975; Sarason, 1982), or exchanging ideas, support, and positive feelings about their work (Mortimore, et al., 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989). The quality of working relationships among teachers is strongly related to implementation. Collegiality, open communication, trust, support and help, learning on the job, getting results, and job satisfaction and morale are closely interrelated. Fullan (1993) has established that, at the teacher level, the degree of change is strongly related to the extent to which teachers interact

with each other and with technical support people. Significant educational reform involves changes in beliefs, teaching style and materials. This change occurs only through personal development in a social context. There must be no obscuring of the primacy of personal contact. Implementation is an ongoing construction of a shared reality among group members through their interaction with each other within a program (Werner, 1980).

Whether innovations are external or internal, the more teachers interact concerning practices, the more they will be able to bring about improvements they themselves see as necessary. Social support is vital for reducing costs and resolving ambivalence in terms of how much change is needed and what can be accomplished. In the final analysis, teachers, as interacting professionals, need to be in position to decide whether the change is meaningful to them.

Utwae School in Kosrae is an encouraging example of necessary change initiated by a few teachers inspiring others through professional interaction. A home-school study conducted by PREL revealed gaps in learning procedures between the culture of home and school. These gaps were serious enough to interfere with the children's ability to assimilate knowledge. Results of the survey indicated significant differences between the way children learned at home and the way lessons were taught at school. Educators perceived a need to restructure the classroom to avoid encroaching upon the culture and provide the same learning procedures at school that operate at home. The decision was made to adapt necessary lessons to child-initiated, peer-interactive, small-group, performance-based active learning models. Science lessons were adapted to engage children in something familiar by creating a text based on their everyday surroundings. Demonstration lessons were regularly conducted by a master teacher to illustrate culturally supportive lessons. Results were encouraging and exciting. These lessons provided a catalyst for other teachers to work together in creating culturally appropriate tasks and materials. Portfolios were devised to incorporate science, math and language arts products. Teachers visit the homes with portfolios to enable children to share their work with parents in an appropriate cultural context. This work is expanding to incorporate additional subjects, more teachers and grades.

Professional interaction among a few teachers is creating excitement and rejuvenation in curriculum design and is encouraging others to begin looking at new ways to improve student learning.

## Guidelines for Teachers: Look Before You Leap

Fullan describes several issues that teachers—individually and in groups—need to consider before deciding whether to invest their energy in a change effort. These issues are divided into seven areas which teachers should consider before adopting the latest innovation:

1. Does the change address an important need? Is there evidence that the practice has worked elsewhere under similar conditions and achieved the results desired? Even if the change is desired, what is its priority? Faced with too many changes, teachers must choose where to put their efforts; if everything is attempted, nothing will succeed.
2. An attempt is needed to assess administrative endorsement and the availability of necessary resources and support to implement the proposed change. Teacher change and the process of change will be hampered or supported, depending upon school leadership.
3. An assessment needs to be made as to whether colleagues are likely to show an interest in the change. If peer interest exists, or can be stimulated, it can develop into one of the most satisfying and necessary aspects of the change process.
4. Regardless of outside opportunities or pressures individual teachers have a responsibility to make some contribution to the development of collaborative work cultures (Fullan, 1990). Contributing ideas and seeking better ideas can be the cornerstone of collaborative cultures.
5. Teacher-leader efforts need to be directed at improving the professional culture of the school—helping to make teaching more public, encouraging norms of improvement, helping teachers examine the consequences of instructional practices (Smylie & Denny, 1989).
6. Teacher unions and professional associations need to assume a leadership role in establishing conditions for improvement and in following up to support implementation and assessing results. In negotiated innovation, costs and rewards are distributed through the deliberate bargaining process conducted with all concerned parties.
7. It cannot be emphasized enough that individual teachers have a personal responsibility to make schools better, if for no other reason than improving their own working conditions. Individual and collegial actions are not mutually exclusive, but both work in concert to produce results.

## Teachers at A Crossroad

Most teachers see the need for improvement. Teachers do not get more involved because:

- Norms or expectations to collaborate are not well developed.
- Bureaucratic inflexibility and structure inhibit involvement.
- The type, design and scale of specific innovations create more costs than benefits for teachers.
- Teacher morale and sense of efficacy affect their ability to embrace change.

Implications of Fullan's (1990, 1992, 1993) synthesis and analysis are that the science and technology of teaching are continually developing, and teaching is an art and science that teachers reflect on and refine throughout their careers. Fullan defined interactive professionalism as the key to successfully cope with continuing development and change in education. He sees teachers and other interested parties working in small groups, interacting frequently to plan, test new ideas, solve new problems, and assess effectiveness. In this vision, teachers would be continuous learners in a supportive community of interactive professionals.

Learning to use change effectively does not only mean implementing single innovations. It implies a change in the culture of schools and a new concept of the role of teachers. In searching for ways to support and motivate teachers to excellence throughout their careers, change in teaching and school cultures is required. Pacific educators interacting as professionals can succeed in effecting changes to lead children in developing to their full potential.

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